

A Vision for Hood Canal: Hood Canal Integrated Watershed Plan

Summary

10 November 2009

The **Hood Canal Coordinating Council (HCCC)** is developing an integrated watershed plan for Hood Canal. The purpose for the integrated watershed plan is to provide a comprehensive, coordinated strategy for protecting and restoring the Hood Canal watershed. The Hood Canal integrated watershed plan is designed to address the HCCC's strategic objectives as described in the HCCC Strategic Plan and to implement the Puget Sound Partnership's *Puget Sound Action Agenda* for the Hood Canal watershed. The framework for the integrated plan is an organizational concept for integrating existing plans and programs to protect and restore the Hood Canal watershed and will include the following elements:

- A **watershed assessment** that describes existing conditions in the Hood Canal watershed and as called for in the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Agenda.
- An **inventory** of existing plans and programs to protect and restore the Hood Canal watershed, and to control water pollution and manage growth.
- A **management plan** that integrates existing plans and programs and prioritizes implementation strategies.

Watershed Assessment describes and establishes a baseline for the planning process and for measuring progress to implement the integrated watershed plan and will include:

- an **overview of current conditions** in the Hood Canal watershed, including a general description of current environmental and socioeconomic conditions and anthropogenic (i.e., human-caused) disturbances.
- a preliminary statement of the **desired future conditions** for the Hood Canal watershed.
- a description of **indicators** that are measurable characteristics that are commonly used to detect and predict change against a background of natural variability. The indicators are **environmental indicators** that reflect the causal chain that links human activities to their ultimate environmental impacts and the societal responses to these impacts and **socioeconomic indicators** that are typically statistical data showing general economic and human development trends.
- a **limiting factors analysis** to identify factors or conditions that have been most responsible for the loss of ecosystem function within the Hood Canal watershed and for causing water pollution, and that will inhibit or prevent attainment of the desired future condition.

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The **inventory** will summarize and assess the current management strategies and ongoing and recently completed restoration and protection projects and programs. The intention is to coordinate planning and implementation for a variety of existing plans and programs, not to replace or replicate them.

The **management plan** will include a vision of the desired future condition, which is a description of land and resource conditions expected to result if management goals and objectives are achieved. Elements of the management plan include:

- **biological and socioeconomic objectives** that will serve as benchmarks to evaluate progress toward achieving the Council's vision for the Hood Canal watershed.
- **strategies** that describe the actions needed to address the limiting factors identified in the watershed assessment and therefore achieve the objectives.
- **prioritized strategies** to address limiting factors identified in the watershed assessment. To accomplish this task the watershed management plan will describe a "prioritization framework."
- **research needs** throughout the watershed as part of a coordination research, monitoring and evaluation program. The program will rely on ongoing research activities, including the Hood Canal Dissolved Oxygen Program.
- **monitoring plan** that builds on existing monitoring activities currently being implemented by action organizations within the Hood Canal watershed, most notably the Hood Canal Dissolved Oxygen Program and the HCCC's Lead Entity Program for salmonid habitat restoration and protection. The monitoring plan will include an **adaptive management** and implementation process to guide ongoing **evaluation** and adaptation for the program.
- **Implementation measures** that are specific actions to achieve the implementation strategies outlined in the watershed management plan will be included in the watershed management plan. The plan will compile implementation measures proposed in various plans and programs identified through the watershed inventory.
- The management plan will provide a section on **governance** that will include recommendations for how the HCCC's members can – to the extent otherwise allowed by law – exercise their primary governmental authorities in a manner consistent with the management plan.
- The HCCC will use the integrated management plan as a basis for **funding recommendations** to state agencies and ultimately to Congress and the State Legislature.